STAR TREK!

#126

MAJEL BARRETT RODDENBERRY
AN UPDATE ON THE NEW MOVIE AND THE STATE OF STAR TREK

MICHAEL DORN
A WORD WITH WORF

WE SPEAK WITH SULU GEORGE TAKEI

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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NEW MOVIE CREW?

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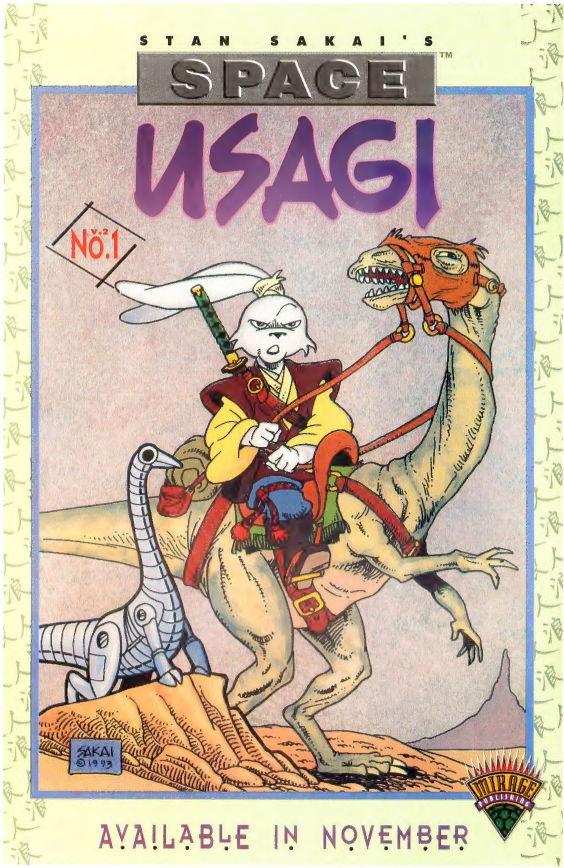
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STAR TREK:
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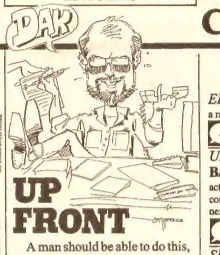

UP FRONT

A man should be able to do this, that, and the other thing, so to speak — to paraphrase SF author and original **Robert Heinlein,** who as you might expect was much more eloquent on the subject of the competent man. It's a quote well worth searching out.

The competent man is the concept embodied in the fiction of **Ayn Rand,** in heroic adventures of whatever category or era, in most superhero comics and, of course, in STAR TREK as well, in all its myriad incarnations.

It's a "can do" kind of thing.

Without that attitude, nothing could or would ever have been accomplished. There'd be no technology, no "civilization as we know it," no space travel — no future.

It's what matters, what's really important. True grit. The right stuff.

Our favorite fictional heroes have it in spades, as symbols of an ideal, but we all have the potential within us. To rise to the occasion, to prove equal to the challenge whatever it may be. Internal or external. Abstract as solving an intricate equation or concrete as fixing leaking plumbing.

Life, the situation at hand, usually provides the motivation. All we need is inspiration, the kind we get from heroes, real or fictional!

The competent man.

David

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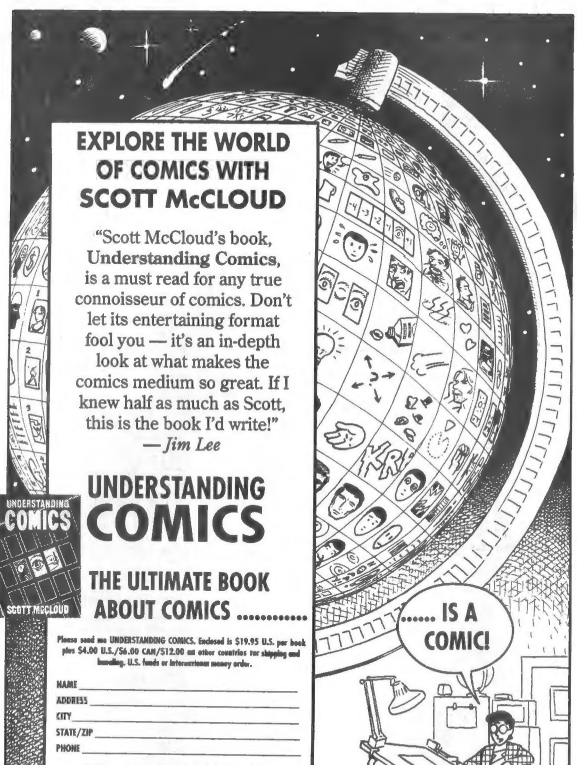

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New movie? "Don't believe all that stuff."

MAJEL BARRETT RODDENBERRY

Names are important. Your name is important to you: how it is pronounced, that it is spelled correctly. From your next door neighbor to Will Eisner, from the man walking his dog to Charles Schulz, from the lady on the intercom to Wendy Pini, this is something you share with everyone, a specific affinity with your own name.

Sometimes names can be humorous, such as a former COMICS INTERVIEW editor's efforts to nickname me "Love" Boatz. Ian Fleming peopled his books with characters with such fun names as Strangeways and Goodnight and, of course, the ever delightful Moneypenny; Ed McBain has for decades maintained a character in his 87TH PRECINCT series by the name of Meyer Meyer; and who could forget that Johnny Cash classic "A Boy Named Sue!" And if you've read THE MAKING OF STAR TREK you surely were amused by some of the many alternate names considered for Spock.

When my wife, Sheryl, became pregnant with our daughter, Jennifer, this instilled in us a fascination with names, not simply with how they sound or look on paper, but also with their origins and their meanings. This is perhaps a normal fascination for parents-to-be.

This past spring we were told the stork would be paying us a second visit, and this of course reintensified our fascination with names. One night we were watching STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, it happened to be the episode where Jonathan Frakes got to play his character twinned, and after a particularly compelling Deanna Troi scene Sheryl asked what I thought of Marina as a name. I was stunned.

To tell the truth, I do like the name Marina. I've always thought it a very good name, very attractive and so on; in fact, save for one problem, I might have decided then and there to go with that name should the child be a girl. But with all due respect to Ms. Sirtis and her name-sharing sisters the world over, I will not call a child of mine Marina Boatz!

Names, after all, are important . . .

DARREL L. BOATZ: *I'm talking with Majel Barret Roddenberry. We want to get an update on what's happening in the STAR TREK universe. But first, my wife was wondering about the origin of your given name.*

MAJEL BARRETT RODDENBERRY: Majel? It's American Indian, evidently. Mother heard it when she was in college; actually, one of her close friends was

All STAR TREK art & photos accompanying this interview ® TM & © 1993 Paramount Pictures

"I think Leonard is shooting somewhere

named Majel, she liked it, and that's how it happened. It means wood dove. And that's about all I can tell you about it. *(Laughter.)* I'm not Indian but the name is.

DARREL: *That's neat. Let's see, getting into STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE has premiered and had its first season since we last spoke. How is the show doing?*

MAJEL: It's doing *extremely* well. We're running between second and fifth very consistently, and wherever NEXT GENERATION runs DS9 is usually just behind it or one down. But actually we're first! We're first and second every week as far as scripted shows are concerned.

DARREL: *You mean in syndicated programming?*

MAJEL: In syndication, yes.

DARREL: *Okay, TV's got all these different ways of measuring things.*

MAJEL: Yes, they do, it's very strange. If we'd had this way back 25 years ago STAR TREK probably wouldn't have been cancelled.

DARREL: *Really?*

MAJEL: Well, they're doing it by demographics now. When we went off the air . . . I think it was the next year that NBC started into demographics. These people started talking about demographics — these raters, you know — and they asked, "What do you mean by demographics? Give us an *example* of demographics." And they said, "Well, the best show demographically that you could have had was one you cancelled last year, it was called STAR TREK." In other words, we had more viewers between the ages of, let's say, 8 and 45, or 18 and 50 — I'm not exactly sure how it runs — but that's the age when people have more buying power, which is what this whole business is based on. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Of course, you've got to sell that soap.*

MAJEL: That's right.

DARREL: *There were rumors that there might be some cast changes in DS9 for the upcoming season.*

MAJEL: Not at all! To the best of my knowledge, it was *never* contemplated, it was never talked about, it was never *thought* of. There are rumors running around all the time. *(Laughter.)* You hear so many things.

DARREL: *I understand you're working on a new show currently. Is this a DEEP SPACE NINE episode?*

MAJEL: No, this one is NEXT GEN.

DARREL: *NEXT GEN is heading into its* final *season, from all accounts.*

STAR TREK: Deep Space Nine.

MAJEL: Yeah, we sure are. It's *very* disappointing to have to quit when you're right up at the top. I never quite have understood that, but I guess the economics of it just don't allow it to go on that much longer. Over on the NEXT GEN cast we kind of feel like nobody pays much attention to us anymore.

But we are working on some very *fascinating* scripts. These scripts have been around for awhile but no one dove into them, so to speak, and a lot of them are out of the ordinary, such as the one that I'm doing right now. I mean, it doesn't follow the formula of NEXT GENERATION. So, consequently, we're getting some *very,* very interesting shows. I think once this season starts it's going to be well worth watching.

DARREL: *So, these were story concepts that people wanted to do but —*

MAJEL: Yes, they were. As a matter of fact, I remember one day many years ago Gene came in and said, "Well, if they follow through with this story that just came in, you're going to love it!" And he said this and this and this happened — I'm not going to tell you anything because this is somewhat of a mystery, and there's no way I could tell you a little bit without telling you most of it, which would really kind of ruin it. But anyway, he told me about it. So, when it came around again I said, "God, that sounds familiar!" Then later on I remembered I heard about it from Gene. It's got to be at least three or four years old.

DARREL: *Do you know what the title is going to be?*

MAJEL: Yes, it's called "Dark Page." And it's really a tour de force for **Marina Sirtis.** It's both of us together, but it's a fantastic show for her. It's a *fantastic* show for me, too, but she's . . . I don't think there's a scene she's not in.

DARREL: *Well, that's one thing I had noticed about NEXT GENERATION, that every season it seems they get better at showcasing the regular talent on these episodes.*

MAJEL: Mm-hm. And this one really comes at it, too. This one is *very* strong! I think if we pull this off this is going to be one of the *really* good ones.

DARREL: *Great. Sounds like we're going to have a good season to go out on, then.*

MAJEL: I think so. Patrick just finished shooting a show, he finished directing it, just before ours, and that one was pretty wild, too. As I said, I think we're going to end up with some really good stuff this year.

DARREL: *And then, according to various articles that have been out — there was one in TV GUIDE quoting Rick Berman (executive producer) — a NEXT GENERATION film will begin shooting next spring?*

MAJEL: Yes.

DARREL: *And there are supposedly two scripts?*

MAJEL: Yes, there are two scripts — one of them hasn't definitely been chosen over the other yet. I've heard that they are leaning toward the first one that was in. This is not telling you very much, come to think of it, and I *can't* tell you anything. *(Laughter.)* I'm sorry, my hands are tied, they really are. I wouldn't want to ruin it for everybody, anyway. I don't really *know* much more than that. All I know is the rumors about this and that, and I don't put much value on that anyway.

DARREL: *One of the things that had been mentioned in these articles is that in both of the scripts there are characters from the original STAR TREK.*

MAJEL: Don't believe all that stuff. It's *possible,* yes. It could happen. Even Rick himself has announced that — that it *could* happen. But that's not necessarily what will happen. It would depend on an *awful* lot of things. It would depend upon how much money they're going to try to demand, if they would go into it. It would depend upon whether or not they really *want* to go into it.

I mean, to the best of my knowledge, I think that during that time Leonard is

else . . . Bill could make an appearance."

going to be shooting somewhere else. I don't know what Bill is doing, he could make an appearance. As I remember, from what I heard, they wouldn't be the particular *stars* of the show or anything, it would be like an appearance. More than that I do not know — as a matter of fact, I don't even know that! *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Well, the thing I wondered about when I read this stuff was whether the STAR TREK characters would appear* with *the NEXT GENERATION characters, or if they would be done as separate things that were fit together?*

MAJEL: Well, I don't believe it was ever meant to be *all* of the original cast anyway. I think it was just Bill, Leonard and De — that was a *rumor* that I heard. So, I don't know. It would be *very* expensive to pull them all together. And also we'd have to do things like time travel, stuff like that, which . . . Well, if it works it works. We use whatever we can use that will hang in there with the formula, that will be STAR TREK and will be entertainment, and hopefully we can satisfy everybody.

DARREL: *Well, fortunately, being science fiction you can get away with a lot of things.*

MAJEL: Well, you can, but as you will notice we really just try to *not* do that. Gene felt strongly about that, about no fantasy and no time travel. It's just too convenient. Otherwise it's called TIME MACHINE and we'd be on every week as a different series. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Well, since the next film is going to be NEXT GENERATION, does this mean that it's all over and done with*

STAR TREK: The Next Generation.

for the original STAR TREK becoming more films?

MAJEL: My guess would be absolutely yes. Of course, I said that before the last film, too, and somehow or other they managed to throw that one together. But I think all of the reviews on the last one, no matter if they said the show was good — which it *was* — they all started out with the words "long in the tooth." I have a feeling that if Paramount has a viable product out with NEXT GENERATION that they will basically just switch over to that. I can't imagine what else we could do. You know, we have to hire people to go out and do our jobs now if we have an action scene. *(Laughter.)* So, we may have come to the end of it now. I think at this point we're better off in Starfleet Command.

DARREL: *An interesting story could be done there, actually.*

MAJEL: *(Laughter.)* Ah, but these are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise.

DARREL: *That's true, that's true. Well, it's kind of sad that it's over, but on the other hand that was an excellent last show.*

MAJEL: Well, but it's *not* over. I don't like people to say that. It's *not* over. My God, we've got two sitting behind it,and we've got a whole plethora of movies that are going to be coming up. And, as I said, thank goodness for a little greed, because on Paramount's part if they can squeeze another nickel out of STAR TREK you're going to see it. So, don't worry about that.

And, as I said last year, I was fairly secure in believing that they would probably end up doing a new show as soon as they gave up THE NEXT GENERATION, and I still hear an awful lot of rumors to that effect. As a matter of fact, I know that they are making some plans. We haven't got scripts, we haven't got people yet, and I don't think anybody's thinking beyond getting the movie done and putting DS9 up on a pedestal somewhere where it belongs.

DARREL: *There was a Starfleet Academy concept that was floating around a few years back.*

MAJEL: Yes, there was, and I've heard that rumor, too. I certainly hope they

STAR TREK: Classic cast and crew of the Starship Enterprise.

"Gene turned that down many years

don't go that way. Gene thought about it for awhile, too, and then decided, "Hey, there are so many places to go, so many people, so many aliens, so many planets, why bog ourselves down with the past just to show what Spock and Kirk and everybody looked like when they were kids?" That was the basic idea.

Harve did a script and it was *good!* I *loved* it, I thought it was marvelous. I thought when he went down to Australia that was the story, but it turned out that it wasn't at all. But that story is lying around. *But,* as Gene said, we don't *want* to do that, go back and start all over again with a bunch of strangers doing those parts. The people who are in them already are *venerable,* for heaven's sake.

DARREL: *Right.*

MAJEL: So, why go back and rehash it? I don't know. But I had heard that they were thinking of doing that this time, and God I hope not! Gene turned that down many years ago, so I hope to God that they do not do that. It's not even nostalgia; it's kind of sickening when you think of it. Who wants to destroy those images as they are already? You're not getting anywhere.

If you want to go back into Starfleet Academy, do a series in Starfleet Academy, but leave the good ship Enterprise and her captains alone for heaven's sakes. How would you feel if we went back and did Picard as a young kid? I mean, I think we've already done that on the show, so let's leave it alone and move on! *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *You mentioned stories that had been sitting around, and that reminded me that there was supposedly a book in the works, a new novel, coauthored by Gene Roddenberry.*

MAJEL: Oh, you mean THE GOD THING?

DARREL: *THE GOD THING, yeah!*

MAJEL: Frankly, when it first came around — I had, you know, the right to take a look at it and turn it down if I didn't feel it was up to par, that was in the contract. They got a young man in to write it, and he is an excellent writer and he wrote an awful lot — it needed a lot of filling in, in other words; it needed quite a bit more to it — and he did an excellent job. But it was no more **Gene Roddenberry** than if you picked up a pen and tried to write as **Gene Roddenberry.** You could *see* it! So, I didn't okay it.

What they're doing is they're looking for somebody else now who can go ahead and do that, write it like it's Gene's work. If you're going to put **Gene Roddenberry's** name on a book it better be **Gene Roddenberry,** or at least what he *would* have done.

DARREL: *It's a shame James Blish isn't still around.*

MAJEL: Is he still writing?

DARREL: *James Blish? I'm afraid he passed away several years ago.*

MAJEL: Oh. You see, I don't even know. I really don't pay much attention to the books. I haven't found them, with a *few* exceptions, to be that palatable. Gene was terribly upset with them for awhile, because they went out and they took all sorts of liberties. Kirk had other children, had four or five other wives, and brothers and sisters, things like that; and I've got to tell you, unless it comes out in the series it didn't happen.

DARREL: *Right, right.*

MAJEL: So, if these people want to invent a world or so on, fine, but don't mess around with Gene's.

DARREL: *I had a friend several years ago who became enormously frustrated trying to figure out how all of these books fit into one another.*

MAJEL: They don't, not at all. You know how they fit in? They all make money for Paramount. And that's where, really, Paramount showed absolutely no discretion whatsoever. They allowed them to go on until Gene put his foot down. And now, of course, they're sprouting up again because there really isn't anybody there who cares enough for the integrity of the show, unfortunately.

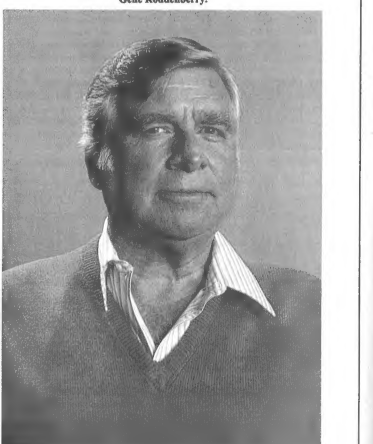
DARREL: *The other thing I was wondering about, there is a virtual reality complex of some kind —*

MAJEL: There sure is, there's going to be a *bunch* of them.

DARREL: *How is that progressing?*

MAJEL: How is that going? I think they opened one of them up in . . . in San Jose. Some of our characters went up and did some stuff with them, but I don't know what they did. But, yes, they are a reality, they are opening, they're going to be *fun!* Paramount now has a bunch of amusement parks, too, so I believe they are going to put up their own amusement centers at those. And I believe Universal's going to close down after their contract is up this year, as will

Gene Roddenberry.



ago, so I hope to God they do not do that?"

undoubtedly MGM's, at least that's what I've heard.

DARREL: *Did you go through and do the virtual reality stuff yourself?*

MAJEL: I went through it in Houston, I did the *real* thing. *(Laughter.)* No, I haven't seen Paramount's version. But when I was down in Houston I went to the training camp where the astronauts were, and they were *very* nice. They took me through everything, took me through all the tests that they could operate, or that they figured that I wouldn't get mad or throw up all over everything. *(Laughter.)* And I went into the shuttle, of course. I went into, at that time, Freedom, which is the space station. It was a day that I shall never forget as long as I live.

They had all the astronauts who were there training, getting in and out of the shuttle with ropes and things like that to simulate weightlessness, if they had an accident and had to get outside the ship, so it was fun watching that. And then, of course — I'm usually wearing pants when I go out on days like that, but this one day I had a skirt on — so they said, "Okay, go on and crawl on up in the shuttle." *(Laughter.)* I said, "I'll be darned if I'm going to let a skirt stop me from this!" So, in I go. That's quite a revelation, too. You see that great big *huge* thing there and you say, "Where's the living room?" *(Laughter.)* But there is no such animal, of course, and inside it's all such *very* very confined space. And then it is fun, because I have a dish at home, so I watch NASA Select with all of these guys who I had met there, who went up. It was fun watching them having *been* just exactly where they were.

DARREL: *Wow.*

MAJEL: But the virtual reality glove, I put that thing on with the mask, and they kept on straightening me back up and putting me back up on top of the ship, and I'll be darned, I would slide off every single time. So, I wasn't a real good candidate for that.

DARREL: *So, it's virtual reality but it's quite a bit different from actual reality.*

MAJEL: Oh, yeah. Well, you can't *think* the same way. You're dealing with weightlessness, and I don't understand that.

DARREL: *Well, I've basically run through all the things in my notes here. Apparently we have a good season of NEXT GENERATION to look forward to.*

MAJEL: Absolutely.

DARREL: *How about DEEP SPACE NINE?*

MAJEL: I don't know anything about the stories, but they're plotting away on them. They're paying an *awful* lot of attention to it. You've got a new look in the Promenade. I just went through the stage the other day for the first time and I was absolutely *shocked!* It's *happy!* It's more honky tonk. It looks great, it looks just great! So, they have made a bunch of improvements on that, physical improvements. And the stories . . . I think they're kind of settling in to what kind of stories they want to do. And everybody seems very happy. Everybody's back. It looks like a good year.

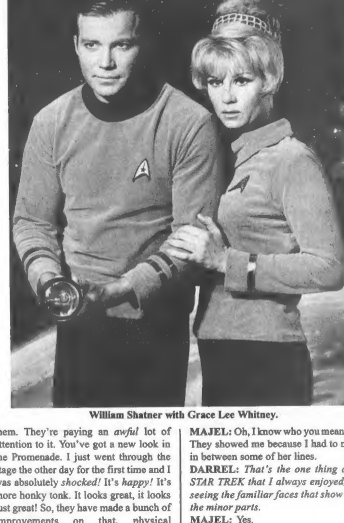
DARREL: *Great! And if we want to see the original cast of STAR TREK, we've got MCI commercials and everything else.*

MAJEL: Oh, my, yes! *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *That was hilarious.*

MAJEL: I haven't seen it yet but I've heard all about it. And I'm doing the voice on the new Hallmark 1701-D ornament commercials; I do the computer voice on that.

DARREL: *Yeah, I think I've seen that, with the actress who plays the nurse on NEXT GENERATION?*



William Shatner with Grace Lee Whitney.

MAJEL: Oh, I know who you mean, yes! They showed me because I had to match in between some of her lines.

DARREL: *That's the one thing about STAR TREK that I always enjoyed, was seeing the familiar faces that show up in the minor parts.*

MAJEL: Yes.

DARREL: *One thing that just occurred to me: STAR TREK fandom, of course, is still out there. How does that work with Paramount and official communications with fandom? They seem to be cooperative a lot of the time, but then there are other times when it seems that these fan clubs and so on become very frustrated about things.*

MAJEL: Somehow or other, where fandom is concerned, Paramount has *accepted* it now. It took 25 years for them to accept, "Hey, you know, maybe the fans *did* have something to do with this show." But it is a very unique show inasmuch as it *was* the fans that *did* keep it going, keep it on, since we had such a *strong* following. I think it is the fans, basically, who are doing it again. I'm not

"Paramount has *accepted* fandom now."

Some samples of the new Skybox Master Series: STAR TREK premium trading card set.

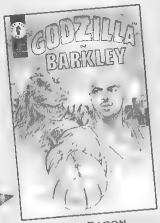
sure that they give them *enough* credit, or pay *enough* attention to them.

The show itself and the people *in* the show have *also* kept that image, that marvelous view, alive, and all of that enthusiasm alive. And we're still doing it. The shows are moving along, everything is great, and Paramount can really kiss their lucky stars. *(Laughter.)* You know, that we do go out and do it. But, it's alive, it's well, it's thriving and it's growing, which is *marvelous!*

We're also getting change, the *look* is changing, it's a much more *universal* look now. You can see anyone at a convention, let alone at just a fan gathering. I was over in Germany two weeks ago and this one was sponsored by a medical group, so you can see where it's going. These are not just kids, these are not just space people or anything. It encompasses *all* age levels and *all* people.

HOLIDAY WISH LIST

DECEMBER 1993 FROM DARK HORSE COMICS



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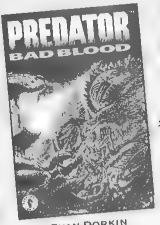

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DARK HORSE COMICS

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS!

"It looks like there will be a movie

President, publisher and editor, Dan Madsen.

released next Christmas season (1994)."

Going where no one had gone before, Dan Madsen founded the STAR TREK fan club just out of high school with 15 members in 1979. Today, he runs the Official STAR TREK Fan Club, a large organization with over 105,000 subscribers from all over the world. A man with a true love of the STAR TREK universe and philosophy, he was kind enough to offer insights into rumors of the proposed upcoming STAR TREK film — possibly starring both the original and NEXT GENERATION casts — as well as share insights into the phenomenon that has become a cultural lifestyle and new mythology for generations of followers . . .

MARK LUCAS: *There's going to be a new STAR TREK film.*

DAN MADSEN: That is indeed the rumor that is going around right now. Quite frankly, I think, if Paramount does produce another STAR TREK film, it's going to be very exciting, and it will be very good for the Fan Club. The rumor is that it may tie the original crew and the Next Generation together. Time will only tell whether that indeed does happen.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dan Madsen
Age: 31
Place of Birth: Aurora, CO
Residence: Aurora, CO
Education: High school education. My college education was developing the Fan Club.
Greatest Influences: STAR TREK, the films of **George Lucas** and **Steven Spielberg**, and the morals and ideas of Abraham Lincoln. (I collect a great deal of Lincolnana.)

MARK: *Have you heard anything about what sort of format it would take, be it time travel, or would the two casts actually meet?*

DAN: I have not heard of a storyline or how it would work if they did the two together. The only thing I can tell you is that **Rick Berman**, in an interview with the Official Fan Club Magazine, did tell us that they were working on two different stories, one that featured all the original cast and one that only had a few of them in it. How those two crews would meet, if that's the story they choose to use, I don't know at this point. But, I know it would be a box office smash to have the two crews together in the same film.

MARK: *Why have the two crews together — as opposed to doing two separate films?*

DAN: I think they're of the mind that it's time to pass the baton from the original crew to the Next Generation. The best way to do it would be to have a movie that literally does that. STAR TREK VI was

All STAR TREK art & photos accompanying this interview ® TM & ©1993 Paramount Pictures

"We're living in a space age. STAR TREK

the original crew's swan song. It's time to move on to new things. I'm sure that's what Paramount feels. It looks like there will be a movie released next Christmas (1994). We're also fairly sure that the Next Generation will be in the movie. Whether the original crew (and in what form) will be there, we don't know. We're waiting to see what Paramount's plans

MARK: *So, should we expect this to be the last season of the Next Generation?*

DAN: That's a good question. I asked that of **Rick Berman** himself. He said, it appears that it is the last. He said, "It's hard for me to say that because it's like pounding the last nail into the coffin." It appears that it will be the last, at this point, and then they will go into making a movie.

MARK: Do you feel the audiences for the two different STAR TREKs are one audience or whether they are two separate groups who intersect?

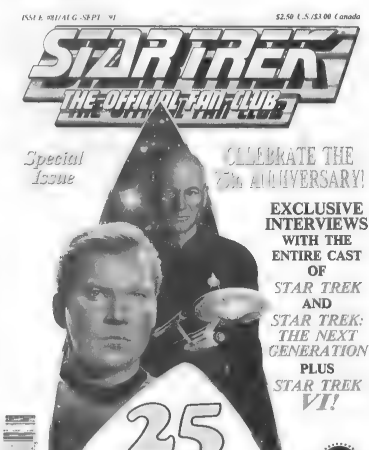
DAN: I think if you had gone back six years ago, it would have been two different audiences, but, in my opinion, the audience is the same now. I think the original STAR TREK fans have come to love and accept the Next Generation, and those who have discovered the Next Generation have gone back and watched what the original crew have done and loved that. So, I see STAR TREK as having one audience. You might have favorites, meaning some may prefer the Next Generation over the original or vice-versa, but primarily it's the same audience. STAR TREK fans now are open-minded to STAR TREK being made with new people. Before Next Generation came around, I think most fans felt that STAR TREK was Kirk, Spock, and McCoy and that's it. There was no other STAR TREK. When the Next Generation came around, there was some resistance to it. Over the last seven years, it's proven itself to be a worthy successor to the original STAR TREK. I think it's warmed the fans up to the idea of STAR TREK being made with new people. Because of the Next Generation's success, I think DEEP SPACE NINE has had an easier time of being accepted by people since they have already come to see that STAR TREK can still be made without the original people and still be done well. So, people today view STAR TREK differently than they did seven or eight years ago. I think they're more open-minded now to various crews living within this universe created by **Gene Roddenberry.** For that reason, I think STAR TREK fans love both the original and the Next Generation and DEEP SPACE NINE, and don't consider themselves part of this team or that team; they see it as all one universe and have come to accept it as such.

MARK: *What do you think it is about the STAR TREK phenomenon that allows these people to accept all different casts and worlds?.*

DAN: It certainly comes right down to that basic philosophy of **Gene Roddenberry's,** which is a positive view of the future, of peoples of all different sizes, shapes, and colors working together, not being overcome by technology but working with technology to improve life. It's also this feeling of exploring space, which is a great frontier. We are now sending a space shuttle up which is literally a space ship, because it takes off, it goes up in space, it comes back down, and it can be used again. I think we're living in a space age. We can see that STAR TREK isn't as far fetched as we might have thought it to be 30-40 years ago. I think people are more open-minded to the idea of space travel and exploring the stars. When you merge that with Gene's philosophy of humankind living together in peace, with great storytelling and interesting characters, and with novel concepts and ideas that were introduced into the original show and were carried through to the latest incarnation, I think you find that STAR TREK is a kind of modern day mythology, taking the place of some of the older ideas that used to be expressed before we had television and radio. STAR TREK today is kind of our modern mythology.

MARK: *Do you think, in 25, 50, or 100 years, people will look back at STAR TREK as a piece of cultural history?*

DAN: Yes, I do. I think they will look back upon it as part of our cultural history. If you were going into the future 100 years from now, it's hard to say whether STAR TREK would be viewed as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PLUS STAR TREK VI!
25 YEARS

today is kind of our modern mythology."

anything of great importance. I think it would be viewed as very important as far as entertainment goes. But, whether it would have accomplished higher or loftier goals than that, I can't say. I certainly think that STAR TREK has what it takes to be remembered 100 years from now. Indeed, I think people will look back and possibly revere the original crew, because they were the grand-daddies, the ones who started it all, who pushed it off onto its maiden voyage. I think **Gene Roddenberry** will be considered a forward-thinker and a man ahead of his time, without question. He certainly reserved a place in the history books for his name.

MARK: *Do you think the science fiction of STAR TREK will become the science fact of the future?*

DAN: Yes. In fact, a lot of the technology that was used on the original STAR TREK series has come to life today. McCoy's laser surgery, the doors that opened and closed (we see those in every grocery store now) . . . there is a lot of the technology that was used in the original show that is coming through today. I know that the people who work on THE NEXT GENERATION try to devise technology on the show that isn't so far-fetched and beyond what could happen in the next 20-30 years. So, much of the technology you see on all the series, especially the original, has already come true and will in time show that there were many forward thinkers working on this series and developing technology that may actually come to pass.

MARK: *How do you think the STAR TREK series have influenced subsequent generations?*

DAN: I think it's given people a positive view of what they would like their future to be like. I know that, many times, many of the actors have told me, when they go places, people tell them that STAR TREK had a great influence on their lives. Had it not been for STAR TREK, they might not have become involved in the space program. I know that **Gene Roddenberry** toured some NASA space facility. When he walked in the door, they all stood up and gave him a standing ovation. He said, "What was that for?" Many of them came up and told him, "Not only have you entertained us, but you have influenced our lives. Had it not been for you, I wouldn't have become involved in the space program" or become an engineer or a scientist. So many of the actors tell me that that happens to them all the time, everywhere they go. **DeForest Kelly** tells me that he gets letters from doctors and nurses saying that they were influenced by his role on the show, to become a doctor or a nurse. So, it's had a great influence, a positive influence, on young people who have grown up to take on roles that were inspired by STAR TREK. I think THE NEXT GENERATION has had a tremendous influence on the younger generation. I think, 15-20 years from now, we may see the results of those who were influenced by it.

MARK: *How much longer do you think the STAR TREK phenomenon can continue?*

DAN: I think it has unlimited possibilities. As long as Paramount continues to have an interest in it, as long as the audience is there for it, and as long as they are able to maintain the quality of the show, which up to this point they've done almost beyond belief, as to how good they've kept the show, actually improving the quality over the years. I certainly think it could do another 25 years without question. It could go as long as it's been around up to this point. I wouldn't be surprised to see a new incarnation of STAR TREK 25 years from now being successful. It all comes down to how much the people involved in the show are willing to put into it. If they put their hearts and souls into it and are doing it for the right reasons, then the audience will accept it and continue to watch. I think STAR TREK has a bright future ahead of it. I don't foresee it ending any time in the near future.

MARK: *Do you see any great changes now that Gene Roddenberry is no longer with us?*

DAN: I don't see any great changes. From my understanding, after the second season, Gene really was not actively involved in the show. I know that **Rick Berman** and **Michael Pillar** had a great deal to do with THE NEXT GEN-

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STAR TREK on TV: "A lot to look forward to."

Lieutenant Worf.

ERATION during the years even Gene was alive. A lot of people automatically think that Gene's death must have changed STAR TREK in some way. It did, because the creator was no longer there, was no longer to add his input and his insight into the universe he created. But he put into place good people who knew what Gene wanted, who knew what

Lt. Commander Data.

STAR TREK was about, and who have continued to keep the flame burning with quality STAR TREK. I think the Next Generation continues to show that STAR TREK is thriving and surviving quite well after Gene's death. DEEP SPACE NINE is a refreshing new look at the universe created by Gene. And, all future STAR TREKs will reflect Gene's personal point of view, albeit with some new touches and changes. I think it's important to be able to have the creative freedom and change, and do a few things to make it a little different or else it will grow stagnant and people will tire of watching the same thing over and over and over again. Gene would have wanted that. Gene told me in an interview that "It would make me really happy if 100 years from now

Captain Jean-Luc Picard.

someone made a new STAR TREK, and people were saying, 'That is really good. That blows away **Roddenberry's** STAR TREK.' That would make me happy if that were to happen. I think there are such talented people still working in this industry that I don't see any reason why my creation can't continue." I think he was very sincere about that, too.

MARK: *From a '60s TV series, expanding to popular culture to conventions, a fan club, almost a lifestyle out there, how do you view this whole phenomenon?*

DAN: I view the phenomenon, in your words, as a lifestyle. STAR TREK is an industry all its own. There is hardly any

William Riker.

place you can go today without seeing something connected to it or a reference made to it. It's really amazing how much it's become a part of our popular culture. I view it as a lifestyle, to a certain extent. People try to live the philosophy of the show. Certainly, the very die-hard Trekkers take that quite seriously. I think the show has become ingrained in our minds. I think it's an optimistic view of what life could be like if we really wanted it to be that way. What it comes down to is

Geordi LaForge.

"Nobody really understands just how many

that, if we can show mankind living in peace with the Klingon empire in the 24th century — and that's no easy task — it should say to us that it's not as tough for us to get along right here on our own planet right now. There are all kinds of messages that you can take from STAR TREK. It's pure entertainment, but there are some important things that the show does say.

MARK: *Speaking of the STAR TREK lifestyle, you are actually living it, being the president of the Official STAR TREK Fan Club.*

DAN: Yes, to a certain extent, I guess that might be true. It's a profession, a job for me. We have approximately 15 employees. Yet, all along the way, I've never lost my passion for STAR TREK, which brought me into this whole thing in the first place. It's amazing. On a daily basis, I deal with fans, with Paramount, the actors and the people who produce STAR TREK, and I'm still amazed at just how popular the show is becoming. It's mind-boggling when you see people coming out of the woodwork who go home and watch THE NEXT GENERATION every night, as well as people who are anxious to see another STAR TREK movie. There are people who read STAR TREK magazines, and those that buy communicator pins. I'm shocked sometimes. Nobody really understands just how many fans STAR TREK has in this country. It's quite underestimated.

MARK: *Could you estimate?*

DAN: **Rick Berman** said that, on average, they have between 20-30 million who watch the show *each week*. I think that's true. Most of those people are probably seriously interested in the show. They may not be so interested that they would go to a convention or join a fan club, but they certainly watch the show with a passion, and might buy a STAR TREK book and read it. I think the numbers are pretty big.

MARK: *Tell me about the Fan Club.*

DAN: We publish the original STAR TREK magazine. We currently have a circulation of 105,000. The magazine comes out six times a year. You get a membership kit initially when you join. You get the official STAR TREK catalogue. We have over 800 items in the catalogue currently. We're kind of STAR TREK Central, the releasers of a lot of information. We offer interviews with the people who produce the show. We sell the merchandise as well, so we're an outlet for STAR TREK collectibles. We have an actor-forwarding service; if you want to write to your favorite actor, we ensure it

gets to them. We have a pen-pal service. We're not a social club, so we don't have meetings where we meet the second Tuesday of every month or anything. But, we primarily offer publishing/mail order.

MARK: *And you're global?*

DAN: We're global.

MARK: *How did you found this organization.*

DAN: I was a STAR TREK fan way back in junior high school, around 1975. I went to the STAR TREK conventions like everybody else. When the first STAR TREK movie came out, I was eagerly awaiting it. I was so excited. I saw the movie and, unlike other people, I really loved it. I thought it was great. I decided to start a fan club for the movie. I advertised it. I think I got 15 members. I got a job at a print show and learned how to do layout and design. Over the course of time, I developed a slicker product. Paramount got ahold of it and said, "This is what we've been looking for. You have the right amount of professionalism with the right amount of fanaticism." They licensed me, and I've been licensed with them since 1983. We've nurtured and developed it over time, added a little merchandise here and there. Before you know it, we built up a catalogue. We're now expanding the pages of the magazine and getting onto the newsstand. It's grown and grown. It's not happened overnight. It's been 12 years in the making.

MARK: *If this is, indeed, the last season of the NEXT GENERATION series, what do we have to look forward to?*

DAN: There's a lot to look forward to. You still have DEEP SPACE NINE on television, which will be on every week. It continues to evolve and grow. It's an exciting project. I think the production team on DEEP SPACE NINE has done a wonderful job of keeping STAR TREK

fans STAR TREK has in this country."

alive. People keep thinking that, once THE NEXT GENERATION leaves TV, it's over. They fail to realize that their adventures have not ended. They're moving from the small screen to the big screen. If they make the movie in April, as **Rick Berman** has mentioned, you're still going to see the crew in new adventures you've never seen before, probably more exciting than any one hour episode you've ever seen on television, because they'll have a larger budget and want to make the movies each as exciting and unique as possible. So, by no means have the Next Generation's adventures ended. They may have just begun with the most exciting voyages once they hit the big screen. STAR TREK, by no means, is going to be losing one of its family. NEXT GENERATION will be there.

MARK: *Can you give us any hints on what to expect in this last season?*

DAN: I know they're working on some good stories for Picard. I know they're working on an interesting story on Geordi LaForge. We'll meet his family, and his father played by **Ben Vereen.** I think the sixth season was a better season than the fifth, and I think they're on a roll. They have exciting plans for DEEP SPACE NINE, with some evolutionary changes for both Kirinarcs and Dax. From what they tell me, there won't be any big changes in characters or sets or costumes in THE NEXT GENERATION. The show will go on as if it wasn't ending. It'll just continue, making good shows with good stories and interesting character development. If the movie is done, it's anybody's guess whether they'll end the show on television in some form or fashion or whether they'll lead you into the movie.

MARK: *Do you eventually foresee a DEEP SPACE NINE film?.*

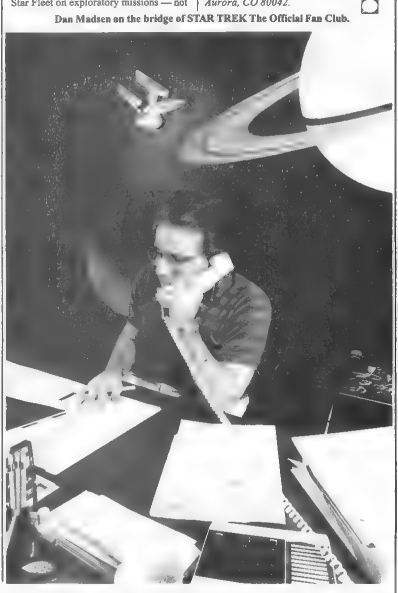
DAN: Possibly. It's hard to say. I think the Next Generation have a lot of life in them as far as movies go. They're all young people. Theoretically, they could be making movies for the next 25 years if they continue to be successful. How long DEEP SPACE NINE stays on television, I don't know. Certainly, THE NEXT GENERATION is the number one rated series in syndication and they're taking that off the air, for whatever reasons Paramount feels they need to do that. Possibly, six years from now they may feel they have to do the same thing with DEEP SPACE NINE. We don't know where the Next Generation will be in the films, or whether they'd do a co-film with the two series, or give DEEP SPACE NINE their own films. It depends on how successful DS9 is six years from now. It's as real a possibility as the Next Generation getting their own movie today.

MARK: *The possibilities sound endless.*

DAN: They are. Really. If there's one thing that STAR TREK has proven, it's that it is endless. There are as many stories and as many characters as there are in the universe. Literally. Gene knew that. He knew that when he created the original STAR TREK. Fans at that time felt there was no STAR TREK if it wasn't with Kirk, Spock, and McCoy. I think Gene knew all along that STAR TREK was greater than just three characters and that it was a universe, an idea, a philosophy, and this organization called Star Fleet on exploratory missions — not military missions but scientific, peaceful missions exploring the universe. How exciting that could be for mankind. Gene knew it was greater than three characters. That's why, when he developed THE NEXT GENERATION, he knew he shouldn't do retreads of the original characters. He needed to make them as unique as every human that lives on this planet. He's done so. **Rick Berman** and **Michael Pillar** have done an admirable job of carrying on that tradition. Let's hope, if they make new series in the future, that the characters are as unique and original as what we've been given in the last three series.

For information on the STAR TREK Fan Club, write: P.O. Box 111000, Aurora, CO 80042.

Dan Madsen on the bridge of STAR TREK The Official Fan Club.



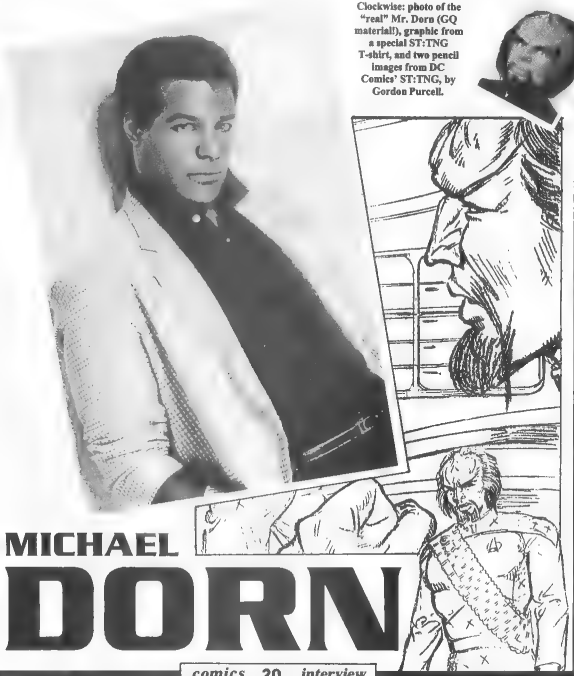
"People are under the impression that when there's an

Since sometime in a long-ago era, the late 1980s actually, fans of science fiction and fantasy and horror and music and comics and who knows what all, in the Florida counties Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco, have enjoyed a TV program that has been called a cross between SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE and ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT.

In the years since it first aired, UNDERGROUND ENTERTAINMENT's fame has grown, and Jumpin' Jim O'Rear and his many-nicknamed cohorts have become influential elbow-rubbers of the rich and famous.

Seriously, I kid you not, I've got the press hype to back this up. They do conventions, guest appearances on other shows, national magazines and comic books have paid them their due — they've even been in a cartoon!

All kidding aside, UNDERGROUND ENTERTAINMENT has made its mark and among its most popular segments are Jumpin' Jim's interviews. Among the notables he has spoken with are Normal Fell, Bob (Captain Kangaroo) Keeshan, Ron Ely, Jack Kirby, Ed Neal, Butch Patrick, Marc Singer, Norm Breyfogle, Sandahl Bergman, Boris Vallejo, Fred Travalena, Mark Texiera, Matt Wagner and Kyle Baker. Also, of course, there



Clockwise: photo of the "real" Mr. Dorn (GQ material!), graphic from a special ST:TNG T-shirt, and two pencil images from DC Comics' ST:TNG, by Gordon Purcell.

MICHAEL DORN

audition for STAR TREK it's like some *happening!*"

Worf, Picard, Troia, and Data — wrap-around trade paperback cover painting, from DC Comics.

have been many STAR TREK interviews in that time, and COMICS INTERVIEW is pleased to present this selection from among them . . .

JIM O'REAR: *Michael Dorn is probably most recognized right now as Worf from STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. I want to basically just start off with where you grew up and what got you interested in acting?*

MICHAEL DORN: Quite a segue, don't you think? *(Laughter.)* Well, I was born in Texas, raised in Pasadena, and I just started . . . well, I was *always* on stage. I was in bands and orchestras and stuff like that through high school, and then I went to college for radio and TV producing. And in college stations you do *everything*. So, whenever I got in front of the camera the department heads would come down and they would say, "You know, he should really pursue that." I didn't really do it until probably '76, '77; I got really *pushed* into doing it by an assistant director on THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW. And I pursued it and it just took off from there.

JIM: *What would you say would be your really really big break?*

MICHAEL: Really really big break? Oh, I don't know. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *It's gonna happen, huh?*

MICHAEL: Yeah. Actually, I guess CHiPS was . . . Well, you know, instrumental was a show called WEBB which was the first thing I'd *ever* done where I had a lot of lines, and it was going to branch into a recurring character, and from that I got an agent and nine months later I got CHiPS and that lasted three years. But I think STAR TREK is probably the best job I've ever had.

JIM: *How did you get the audition for that?*

MICHAEL: It's just — you know, people are under the impression for some reason that when they say there's an audition for STAR TREK it's like some *happening!* But it was just another interview, for *all* of us. We knew it was for a pilot, we knew it would be *fairly* successful — at least the first episode would be, you know. *(Laughter.)* But that was about it, and I just read for it and got it.

JIM: *Did you feel any pressure from the old TREK fans?*

MICHAEL: Well, when you're just interviewing nobody else is in there, it's not like you've got all of this stuff working against you at all. It's just another interview that you go on.

JIM: *When you went into that did you know you were going to be auditioning for Worf? What did you think when you first got this call that they wanted you to be this Klingon?*

MICHAEL: Well, my manager didn't know what a Klingon was, what I was interviewing for. *(Laughter.)* But I knew. And it was great because I *wanted* to play a character in makeup, I wanted to do that. So, it was sort of like a blessing.

JIM: *How early do you have to get there to get all that makeup on?*

MICHAEL: Usually two hours before time, before call time, which is usually five or six or something like that.

JIM: *Ow!* (Laughter.) *Much too early to be awake. Now, I talked to you a couple of years back and you seemed to be having a whole lot of fun on the set. Is it still as exciting and fun as it was two years ago?*

MICHAEL: Oh, yeah. You talked to me two years ago?

JIM: *Yeah, up at the Atlanta Fantasy Fair a couple of years back.*

MICHAEL: Was I witty?

JIM: *You were very witty.* (Laughter.) *What would you say would be one of your favorite things that you've done on the show, like a favorite episode?*

MICHAEL: Well, you know, Worf has had a lot of good moments; most of his stuff I've enjoyed. He's had great lines and wonderful scenes. One of my *favorite* episodes is the one where Data builds his child. I think that's my favorite episode. But, you know, there's no . . . I never really wanted to, like, have a bunch of shows *just* about me. I prefer just acting *with* different characters in a show. Patrick and Jonathan and Brent are three of my favorites to act with. Marina is wonderful, too. And Colm is a wonderful actor.

JIM: *There was a nasty rumor going around Florida that at the end of the last season, the cliff-hanger, that they wrote that and didn't know how they were going to finish it. To clear it up, is that*

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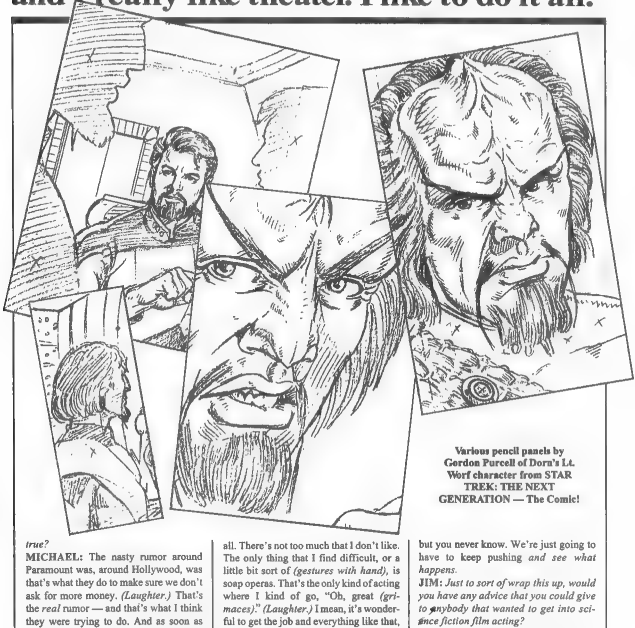
"I like it all, I love television, I love movies,

Pencil page by Purcell from ST:TNG #7, featuring Picard and Worf.

and I really like theater. I like to do it all."



Various pencil panels by Gordon Purcell of Dorn's Lt. Worf character from STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION — The Comic!

true?

MICHAEL: The nasty rumor around Paramount was, around Hollywood, was that's what they do to make sure we don't ask for more money. *(Laughter.)* That's the *real* rumor — and that's what I think they were trying to do. And as soon as everybody negotiated that's when they started writing the script and kept everybody there, but till that point *anybody* could die. I could press the button and get electrocuted, you know, and Worf is gone. It could be, but we never know. You never know what these people are thinking.

JIM: *You mentioned early on that you used to do a lot of stage work. Do you still get to do any of that?*

MICHAEL: No, it's pretty much this is it, at least for another couple of years. As soon as this is over then I'll go back.

JIM: *Do you like the stage more? Or would you rather be in front of the camera?*

MICHAEL: I like it all, I really like it all. There's not too much that I don't like. The only thing that I find difficult, or a little bit sort of *(gestures with hand)*, is soap operas. That's the only kind of acting where I kind of go, "Oh, great *(grimaces)*." *(Laughter.)* I mean, it's wonderful to get the job and everything like that, but it's like . . . You'll say, "You know, I'd really like to do this in a dramatic —" And they'll say, "Michael, forget dramatic, just do the line." And that's all they want. But I like it all, I love television, I love movies, and I really like theater. I like to do it all.

JIM: *Are you looking at any scripts now for any movies in the time off that you have?*

MICHAEL: There are two scripts right now that we're trying to jump on for the hiatus, which is May or June or something like that. One is an airplane movie, a war movie, and one is a detective show, a movie that's going to be shot around that time. Hopefully I'll have an opportunity, but you never know. We're just going to have to keep pushing *and see what happens.*

JIM: *Just to sort of wrap this up, would you have any advice that you could give to anybody that wanted to get into science fiction film acting?*

MICHAEL: Don't! *(Laughter.)* Don't! You know, if you want to try *acting* then it's good to get a real knowledge of *all* types of acting, not just science fiction acting. It's good to have it all. I mean, Patrick has probably never *thought* of doing science fiction but his background in **Shakespeare** and in the stage really prepared him for that. Same with all of us, you know. You just have to go to college, go to school and learn as much as you can before you get out there. Believe me, there's going to come a time when somebody's going to say something to you and you're going to go, "What?" *(Laughter.)* "How do I do that, oh my God!" It's good to be prepared.

"We reached a peak with STAR TREK IV."

GEORGE TAKEI

George with (left to right) Walter Koenig, Gene Roddenberry, James Doohan and Meg "The Cage"/ "The Menagerie" Wyllie — c. 1991.

JIM O'REAR: *Jumpin' Jim O'Rear at the Tampa Trek Con with George Takei — did I say that right?*

GEORGE TAKEI: You said it *very* well. One would think you're Japanese, Jim. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *We want to get an overall view on the whole STAR TREK concept, starting with the television series. How did you get the part of Sulu?*

GEORGE: Nothing really extraordinary. My agent called with an interview for a pilot film — which is actually a demonstration film; it's not the series itself. I went and got interviewed by Gene Roddenberry and two days later my agent called to say that I was cast. But then there was still pins and needles because that's the pilot film which is shown to the networks, the advertisers, and so forth. And we waited for awhile and that sold, so we got on the air. But then it was *still* pins and needles time — because our ratings were very low. Each season it was like THE PERILS OF PAULINE, you know, hanging on by the fingernails, wondering whether we would be renewed or not.

As a matter of fact, after the second season we *were* cancelled. But we already by that time had gotten a hard-core group of dedicated, tenacious fans and they started their letter-writing campaign, and because of that we were revived for a third season. But they switched the time slot to Friday nights at 10:00, which was *not* our slot. Our ratings plummeted, and therefore the television exposure came to an end. And we thought we'd fade away, you know, just gracefully like old soldiers. But that wasn't to be because the letter-writing campaign started up again, and they decided to revive us as a series of animated Saturday morning cartoons. So we came back in *that* guise, I think it was in '72 or '73. It lasted for about two years.

And that just added to the momentum. It kept building and building, until finally — ten years after the cancellation of the TV series — we came back as a major motion picture. And that critically got mixed reviews, but the box office was sensational. So they decided to do a sequel to that two years later. That was equally well received at the box office, and that started to take on a head of steam of its own. We sort of turned the sequel formula upside-down, because generally a sequel does a tad bit less than the original film. But our sequels seemed to *top* the previous installment. Each new installment seemed to do better than the previous one.

JIM: *Doing something right?*

GEORGE: Well, we were. We reached a peak with STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME. That was the singular most successful STAR TREK yet. When STAR TREK V opened, it opened well, but that was a *very* competitive summer. The first week we opened we did $17.6 million, which was *very* good. The second week GHOSTBUSTERS II opened and our box office plummeted 60% to $7.1 million. The next weekend BATMAN opened and we did $3.2 million or something. And then the weekend after that HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS, the weekend after that KARATE KID III, the weekend after

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"Roddenberry knew how to cast for ensemble. He

Grace Lee Whitney, Walter Koenig, DeForest Kelley, Majel Barrett-Roddenberry, Leonard Nimoy, Gene Roddenberry, Nichelle Nichols, James Doohan, George Takei, and Roger C. Carmell (Harry Mudd). Only absentee: William Shatner.

that LETHAL WEAPON II, and the weekend after that JAMES BOND XXXIX. *(Laughter.)*

It slowed down tremendously at $48 million, and we need to do somewhere between $75 million and $80 million to break even, just to break even.

JIM: *Do those overall totals include video sales and that kind of thing, though?*

GEORGE: No, they do not. That'll come later. The decision on sequels at the studio is based *solely* on the domestic box office. Yes, they will be making more from other ancillary sources, the videos and foreign sales and television sales, etc. But that's traditionally not been part of the formula in terms of a decision on a sequel.

JIM: *Did you have any idea while working on the television series that it was going to become so popular and get all these spin-offs and the comic books and movies and all that? Did you know back then that it was going to be that popular?*

GEORGE: Well, because I want your audience to think that I'm wise and prescient and have foresight, that I'm a visionary, I should say, "Yes, I knew that 24 years later we would be *still* doing STAR TREK!" *(Laughter.)* But, unfortunately, I was not.

What I had, in fact, predicted was that we would be lucky to last two seasons. Because with STAR TREK I smelled quality; it was a show put together with a great deal of imagination, care and integrity. I saw a lot of very *talented* people associated with the production. And television is not known for respecting quality, so I said, "Given this quality show and given the nature of television, we'll last two seasons." I was off by one — but as it turned out I was off by *decades! (Laughter.)*

JIM: *Since it was a new cast and a new thing going onto television, I know that new shows starting out . . . a lot of ego and attitude problems and that kind of thing come up.*

GEORGE: What, us? *(Laughter.)* I don't know what you're talking about. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *What was the working atmosphere like on the set?*

GEORGE: Oh, absolutely, it was a *good* working atmosphere. We had — and this is a tribute to **Gene Roddenberry** — he knew how to cast with an eye for the ensemble. He knew how to cast people who were compatible with each other, and who brought talents that reinforced and complemented each other. So, it was a very good working environment we had on STAR TREK. You get a wonderful sense of our camaraderie and enjoyment of each other off the screen.

JIM: *Right.*

GEORGE: We'd like to think that we're good enough actors so that we can *fake* that when we actually *hate* each other. *(Laughter.)* But we're really not that good; what you see is really the truth. We do have that kind of chemistry. And I look forward to each STAR TREK movie because we do enjoy each other's company.

JIM: *And that natural stuff comes across on film. I mean, most of the time you watch and say they're fakin' it, but —*

GEORGE: We really hate each other. *(Laughter.)* We're at each other's throats, but what you see coming off the screen is *brilliant* acting! *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *What is your favorite episode of the television series?*

GEORGE: Well, you know, there's one episode in which Sulu gets to demonstrate his swashbuckling prowess, "Naked Time." That was great fun and I am most fond of that.

JIM: *Going on to the films, how did Shatner and Nimoy come to direct the films that they did?*

GEORGE: Well the pattern was set by Leonard. He was at one time rather unhappy with continuing to play Spock. He felt that his career was constrained by the tremendous impact that the character Spock had made, and so he was trying to get away from it. He was resisting coming back to each new installment of STAR TREK. So, the studio had to seduce him. *(Laughter.)* By, you know, offering him more and more. And it got to the point where they couldn't offer him money, so they offered him the directing opportunity, which Leonard had actually lobbied for. So, that pattern has been set by Leonard's chomping at the bit, so to speak, as an actor.

And it turned out that was a very wise move on his part because he has *enormous* talents as a director! And he seems to be wanting to grow in that direction more than as an actor now. He's enjoyed enormous success as a director, certainly with STAR TREK III and STAR TREK IV, and subsequently with THREE MEN AND A BABY. Then something quite different, THE GOOD MOTHER, a very serious examination of the contemporary approach to women in very trying and intimate situations. It was, I think, a very *penetrating* examination of that contemporary issue. So, he's enjoying an enor-

knew how to cast people who were compatible."

Gordon Purcell's pencils — page 3 of DC Comics' adaptation of STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY. George's "Sulu" character is showcased in this opening sequence.

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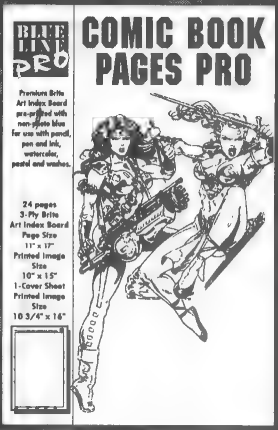
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"The first week we opened we did $17.6 million."

mously successful career as a director.

JIM: *How about Shatner, his work on STAR TREK V?*

GEORGE: Leonard set that pattern and Bill, you know, wants his, too, just to be fair! So, he dove into STAR TREK V, and I must say on the set he created a good working environment. But STAR TREK V has not done, as I said a little bit earlier, as well as the ones directed by Leonard, and I'm sure that that's going to make some kind of impact on his decision to follow the path that Leonard's blazed.

JIM: *As far as their overall concept of directing films on the whole STAR TREK concept, do they basically complement each other, or is it two totally different working atmospheres?*

GEORGE: You mean the approach that the two actors have, between Leonard and Bill?

JIM: *Yeah.*

GEORGE: Well, you see, the kind of personalities — you've been watching STAR TREK long enough to know the difference between Spock and Kirk, and also the difference between **Leonard Nimoy** and **Bill Shatner.** Certainly, they bring their very *strong* personal imprint to both their styles of directing

JIM: *When you come to conventions like this do you ever get confronted by fans that seem to know so much more about the series than you yourself?*

GEORGE: Oh! Absolutely. I don't pretend to be an expert on STAR TREK. I just reported to the studio, punched in in the morning, said the lines that I had memorized, and when the time came I punched out and went home. It's those people in the audience that have *studied* the episodes, have examined *every* nuance of this. They have interviewed all of the various technicians as well as the actors. They know the lore, they know the history, they know the *entire* body of STAR TREK. And I don't pretend to be that. I am a tiny gear in the huge machinery of STAR TREK.

JIM: *What was your favorite film to work on?*

GEORGE: I would say, of the STAR TREK series, probably STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME. In part because we shot on location in San Francisco, and that is such a *wonderful* city to work in; I *love* that city. It's my father's home town, and it's got a collection of the greatest restaurants in the world. Every night we got a chance to explore and taste and sample different restaurants that are representative of San Francisco.

JIM: *That one seemed like a lot of fun to work on; even the script, with the humor and all that was involved.*

A mere fraction of the many items available from the merchandising of the original STAR TREK.

GEORGE: Exactly, exactly that.

JIM: *Now, if they do decide to do a STAR TREK VII would you —*

GEORGE: Now wait, that's an iffy question.

JIM: *That's true, but I'm getting a message from Marcello.*

GEORGE: Marcello, Marcello! You're mispronouncing that poor man's name *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *If for some reason, an act of God or whatever —*

GEORGE: We had God in STAR TREK V. *(Laughter.)* And you saw what God did in that! *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Would you yourself be interested in directing anything like that?*

GEORGE: Well, you know, you're asking a *preposterously* iffy question — and we've already put it in that context, right?

JIM: *Right.*

GEORGE: So, in that context of the preposterously iffy, I'd *love* it!

"We look at the structure and feel of what some-

TONY MEININGER

Left to right: Bruce Johnson, Ron Bawden, Tony Meininger, Bill Church, Mark Levec and David Heilman, with the model from STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9.

As the creator of models for STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION and STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, Tony Meininger is largely responsible for the fabrication and design of various spacecraft and sets on science fiction's most popular television series. Through Brazil Fabrication and Design, Meininger takes ideas and fleshes them into three-dimensional functioning models, constructions which aid in creating an illusion of the future come alive. We caught up with creative and philosophical Meininger at his studio as he shed light on their creation and what it's like working on STAR TREK . . .

MARK LUCAS: *What's involved in making models for STAR TREK?*

TONY MEININGER: Initially, there's a need for a model. We do other kinds of models, too, but let's take the spaceships, which are the most prevalent of the models. They'll either have a concept or a drawing or a very complete drawing — they'll come many ways — from the art department or from the script. Whatever those needs are, we make it into a real object that can be photographed.

MARK: *How do you take what you see in the diagram or picture and actually develop it into a three-dimensional object?*

TONY: Basically, we look at the structure, look at the feel of what somebody else has thought of, add our own little bits if needed. Start thinking about how we'll build it. The models always have some kind of internal lighting. They're shot on motion control systems, so they have some kind of very specific mounting configurations. A lot of them can be mounted from the front, back, bottom, or

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Tony Meininger
Age: 47
Born: Scottsbluff, NE
Residence: Altadena, CA
Occupation: Model maker/designer, Brazil Fabrication and Design
Influences: Painters, artists, writers, thinkers, mechanical designers, race car designers, a lifetime of influences.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE TM & © 1993 Paramount Pictures. Photos are the property of Meininger/Design

body else has thought of, and add little bits."

sides. We incorporate those into a basic design and method of attacking, then we make patterns for the basic shapes of the ships. These get turned into molds. We start making parts and detail the parts. The many, many parts go together to make a ship. All the lighting gets put inside. In the last bunch of years, the power supply and everything for the lighting generally are within the ship, unless the ship is real small.

MARK: *What are these made out of?*

TONY: Composites. A multitude of materials. Most of the ships are either heavy styrene plastic or epoxy fiber glass composite.

MARK: *Internally?*

TONY: Internally, there's usually an aluminum or steel substructure that becomes part of the mount, that holds the shells of the ship, and also is an attachment point for any and all electronics or motors that are necessary.

MARK: *How detailed do these need to be?*

TONY: It depends on how they're used. Generally, the ships coming out of the shop here are quite detailed. All that relates to scale; how big is the ship supposed to appear? Is it a ship with 4,000 windows or is it a little two-man ship? Generally, they all receive a same level of detail. Sometimes we have to turn out a ship in a very short period of time. If we know specifically what a shot is going to be, we may back off a bit on detail to fit into time or budget constraints. There isn't a lot of time. They shoot a lot of shows. They're constantly shooting, so by the time they're thinking about a show, it's time to be building. So, there usually isn't a long time. It's television. You move!

MARK: *How long does it take you to create something like the Enterprise?*

TONY: I didn't build the NEXT GENERATION Enterprise. The original one came out of ILM (Industrial Light and Magic).

MARK: *What about something like a Klingon ship?*

TONY: I didn't build the Klingon ship. *(Laughter.)*

MARK: *Romulan ship?*

TONY: I built a Romulan scout ship. It took a few weeks.

MARK: *How many people are involved in this?*

TONY: It depends on the project and what's going on. Generally, a small ship has 3-4 people working on one ship. For bigger ships . . . we did the DS9 space station. That had more people. It was a big deal.

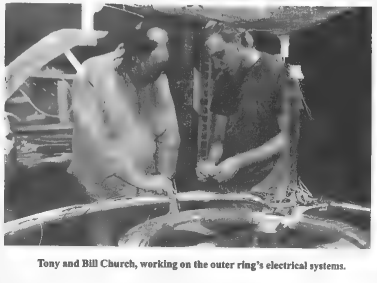
Top down: Various portions and parts of the DS9 space station.

MARK: *How large is that?*

TONY: Roughly six feet in diameter.

MARK: *How much mechanical wiring and such are involved in that?*

"There was design work by Sternbach,



Tony and Bill Church, working on the outer ring's electrical systems.

TONY: There's a lot of wiring and a lot of neon inside of it. A lot of fiber optics. A lot of transformers inside. The special thing about that ship is, because of its design and configuration, we had to have a lot of structure inside of it to hold it up so it wouldn't move or jiggle when being photographed. Therefore, that structure took up a large amount of the internal space that was left over. It's an open design with a lot of thin rings and arcs. But the cross-section of any one part of it is giant. It's not a big mass, like the Enterprise. Structurally, there were a lot of problems to deal with. Once those problems were handled, we had to be careful that the structure couldn't be too big or too thick because it would eat up all the room we had inside of it. There are a lot of holes and open space in the design of the ship. It's packed. It's well packed. We have to leave a little room for heat dissipation and things like that.

MARK: *How much creativity is involved in these?*

TONY: Creativity? Absolutely none. It's the easiest thing to do in the world. Anyone could do it. *(Laughter.)*

MARK: *Is it different from building a house?*

TONY: Houses have been developed according to a very specific methodology . . . statutes that govern how a house goes together, how many nails go in, what kind of panel gets used in what kind of wall, what the spacing of studs are. This isn't like that at all. Everything is different. Every ship we do is a little different, has its own physical problems. Some parts are similar. The drawings aren't complete in that way. There aren't any structural drawings. There aren't any wiring diagrams.

MARK: *So, all of that is left up to you?*

TONY: Oh, yeah. The drawings are more visual representations. "We'd like it to look like this. Is that a problem? If that's a problem, then change it."

MARK: *Is it usually a problem?*

TONY: It depends on the specific instance. Some things are exactly like the drawings. Some drawings aren't very complete, just someone's concept of what it might be like. We work from there. Some are like stick figure drawings. That's not a problem. We've developed a dialogue between the creatives at Paramount and ourselves, so it's easy to communicate. A few words go a long way as to what a ship may or may not be or what it's going to do.

MARK: *Let's take the DEEP SPACE NINE station as an example. How much of that was actually your creation and how much was Paramount saying, "This is what we want?"*

TONY: On that particular station, being a new show and everything, there was a lot of design work done by **Rick Sternbach,** senior illustrator, and **Herman Zimmerman,** production designer, and associates of Paramount. They put a lot of thought into it. So, we had a very complete drawing of the outer skin of the ship, very specific areas. The functions of all the electric areas had been discussed; how they related to the sets, all that stuff. That was all pretty much given. We had to make a few adjustments so we weren't inventing any new laws of physics. But, other than that, it's basically as they conceived it.

MARK: *Paramount's generally happy with what you give them?*

TONY: You'd have to ask them. I'd assume so. We have a real good relationship.

MARK: *Have they ever looked at something and said, "This isn't quite what we wanted?"*

TONY: No, they've never told me that.

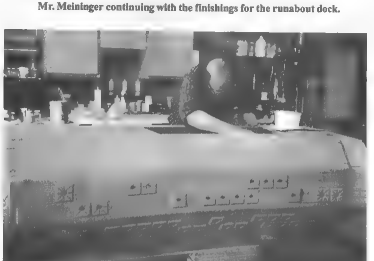
MARK: *How did you become involved in STAR TREK models? It seems like every model-maker/designer's dream who might be a science-fiction fan.*

TONY: We're professionals. It's not an avocation or anything. We have a reputation that's been built up over many years. I guess that means something.

MARK: *How did you first get the STAR TREK contract?*

TONY: I was asked to build a ship by

Mr. Meininger continuing with the finishings for the runabout dock.



Zimmerman and associates of Paramount."

Rob Legado, the special-effects supervisor. They called.

MARK: *Was this for THE NEXT GENERATION?*

TONY: Yes.

MARK: *Did you start at the beginning, when they were first trying to create a look for the show?*

TONY: I didn't build a ship for the pilot but shortly after I started building stuff for them.

MARK: *What's it like, being a part of this whole STAR TREK universe, where you might create something that's seen by millions of people every week?*

TONY: I don't know. We've built things for years that a lot of people see, building objects for photographing since the late '70s. I guess it feels wonderful. I like doing this stuff. It's very interesting as far as how many people see it. I like that we're involved in successful shows and commercials. We work a lot; we spend a lot of time in what we're doing, so there's not a lot of time to reflect.

MARK: *Knowing that maybe when you're 70 you can turn on the TV and see some of your work still around.*

TONY: I think the experience of doing it is real important. It's like painting. For the person doing it when you're doing it, it's different than when it's finished. I really don't think too much about that.

MARK: *What else have you and Brazil Fabrication and Design worked on?*

TONY: A lot of commercials. I worked on a production for the original STAR TREK movie. I wasn't doing miniatures on that, though. We did a series of objects for Duracel commercials that were popular for awhile, about a ten or so. There have been hundreds and hundreds of things we've done.

MARK: *Earlier on, you mentioned you create other models and miniatures besides the spaceships on these shows.*

TONY: Once in awhile, we'll do a miniature set area. It's not always miniatures, but sometimes we'll build pieces that are used in effects photography, the hard items to be photographed. We've done some cloud vortex contraptions. But, mostly the ships. It depends on what's needed at the time.

MARK: *How much do you work with the special effects and lighting/shooting/camera crew?*

TONY: The lighting/shooting crew, not that much. We're usually onto something else. We complete the ship, make sure they understand the workings of it. The show moves pretty quickly. There are pretty competent people throughout all the crews, so there's good dialogue. They take up from where we finish.

MARK: *Do you ever watch these shows after they're done?*

TONY: Oh, yeah. Unfortunately, a lot of times I want to but miss them because we're so busy.

MARK: *Do you see the image/fantasy created, or do you just focus on the models? Has working on this destroyed the illusion for you? Can you enjoy something like TERMINATOR or BABYLON 5?*

TONY: I look it from a bunch of different levels. I'm definitely interested in the stories and what's being talked about. I can separate all of that. A good story is still a good story. A good effect is still a good effect — no matter what. I may understand how something's done; it doesn't destroy it; stuff that's done well you don't notice anyway. When things are done well, I enjoy them. Get a bang out of it.

MARK: *When you were younger, you liked to create things?*

TONY: Always.

MARK: *What did you study in school?*

TONY: Engineering, philosophy, and art.

MARK: *Was this your goal, to create things when you got out?*

TONY: It was built in. I'd always been drawing something, building something, or changing something. I didn't plan to become a model maker or designer.

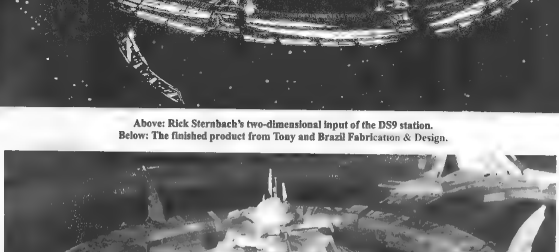
MARK: *How did you become one from engineering, philosophy, and art?*

TONY: Evolution. Sitting in the studio

Above: Church, Johnson and Levoe.
Below: Levoe, Carl Bostrom and Tony "on the station."

"We'd love to have more time or money to go crazy."

Above: Rick Sternbach's two-dimensional input of the DS9 station.
Below: The finished product from Tony and Brazil Fabrication & Design.



didn't pay bills. I was always fabricating things. Someone actually came to me and said there was someone doing this film. They'd like to talk to me.

MARK: *What would you like to do in the future?*

TONY: For 25 years, I've had this list of interests, incomplete projects. I have plenty to do for several lifetimes. I'll be active. Generally it involves making something or perfecting or changing something. It's the way I've always been.

MARK: *What would cap your career?*

TONY: Again, it probably changes every minute. It's in constant flux. Interests change, times change.

MARK: *And STAR TREK? Are you happy, satisfied?*

TONY: We'd always love to have more time or money to go crazy, but there's a real world. I like doing this stuff. It's good for me. The guys here like it. It's interesting. It's good stuff.

"What separates Image G is motion control."

DENNIS HOERTER

Mr. Hoerter accepting a well-earned Emmy for his work.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dennis Hoerter
Age: 44
Place of Birth: Louisville, KY
Current Residence: Los Angeles
Occupation: Special Effects Engineer, Image G Iconographics
Education: M.A. in Theater
Professional Influences: Thomas Barron (owner/creator of Image G), Rob Legatto (effects coordinator of DEEP SPACE NINE), Gary Hutzel (coordinator), and Greg Gregjaein, and especially Tony Meininger (model makers). If God wanted a model, He'd talk to Tony.

The special effects images that are seen on STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION and STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE are spectacular but often taken for granted. For those three seconds showing the Starship Enterprise passing by a sun, a camera crew may spend days painstakingly setting up the shot, shooting, and reshooting it. Using motion control, the highly technical cameras of Image G Iconographics make the illusion of outer space appear real. Special effects engineer Dennis Hoerter's task is to craft the illusion for the camera, taking models of the spaceships and using various tools (from dry ice to a Hoover vacuum) to aid in ensuring the illusions appear real. In Hoerter's own words, "It's challenging to make it fascinating."

MARK LUCAS: *What is Image G?*

DENNIS HOERTER: Image G is a special-effects production studio whose claim to fame is their enormous and varied collection of devices through which you can use motion control. Motion control is one of those odd-sounding terms which, in its simplest form, means using a motor (in this case a stepper motor) that is able to "speak" to a computer in terms of pulses so that the computer can memorize what it does. Every aspect of the camera rig that is used to photograph an object or event is controlled by a motor which is attached to the computer. Ultimately, you are able to program a shot. In the case of a spaceship, it's how the ship may bank left or fly over our heads. **Eric Nash,** the programmer who's done most of the programming over the last five years for STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION and DEEP SPACE NINE, works with the effects coordinator. They program shots and we shoot them. What separates Image G is motion control. These motors allow us to repeat. For example, if you're shooting the Enterprise. One might think it's as easy as lighting the model up, running the camera down, and shooting it. You're done. In the case of the Enterprise and most of the ships, it takes a number of passes to build up a complete element. Without the ability to repeat the programmed move exactly, you would not be able to do it. In the case of the Enterprise, they "beauty light" it. It's as backlit as you can get away with. All models, no matter how well done they are, always appear better when they're slightly backlit. With the Enterprise and most other ships, there's a lot of detail on the surface, so you're able to see that detail by the shadowing. You shot that pass. But, now you're only getting started. Depending on the complexity of the move, you can proceed with a matte pass. A matte pass is . . . when we shoot the Enterprise, you want to lose everything else: the studio walls, the floor, etc. The only way to do that effectively is through the matte pass. What it creates is a window the exact size of the Enterprise, through which to place the finished element. Everything else surrounding it is eliminated in black. We bring up the ultraviolet lights against an orange screen and run the pass. Depending on how complicated the move is, whether you're going around the ship, and whether this piece of orange covers enough of the area, you might have to shoot the shot twice. You then sweep all that away, and then shoot the light passes. In the case of the Enterprise, because there are neon lights and small bulbs inside the Enterprise, all of which burn at different intensities, you have to shoot them separately. You would have to shoot the windows on one complete pass. You run the rig down, repeating the previous move exactly, which would place these windows where they need to be on the shot you took two hours ago. That's the beauty of using a computer. Anyway, you shoot the windows, then the engines on a separate pass, the deflector, the running

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE: TM & © ©1993 Paramount Pictures. All photos are the property of Dennis Hoerter & Co

"There are hours and even days that go into

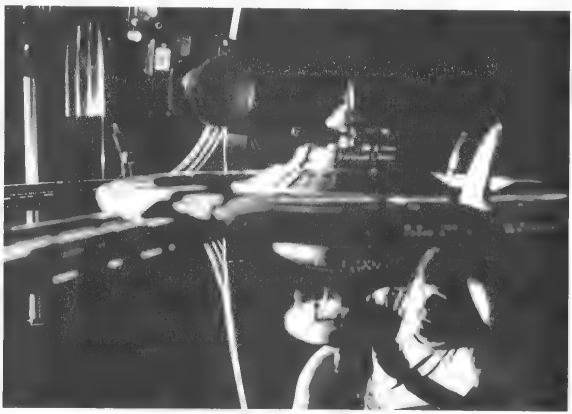
lights and strobes . . . it's five different shots right there. Then, you might have interactive light passes, say it's passing near an explosion or some other event causing light to interplay on the Enterprise. Whatever they would need to varying degrees when they finally put it all together. Once all of this is down, you are done with one single pass, one single move, on one single ship. A good day is maybe getting seven or eight passes. That's if you aren't doing different ships. As you can see, it's a real time-consuming process.

MARK: *For a few seconds on-screen on the show, it's going to be several days worth of work.*

DENNIS: If you count the fact that it goes into post-production, there are hours and even days that go into each second of any of the visual effects you see in STAR TREK or DEEP SPACE NINE. There's a ton of people who've run their hands either over the film or through the attempt at creating the elements that created the film. All that passes so quickly . . . it's hard to conceive unless you're involved in the process, to create those few seconds of interesting TV visual effects. It's not just the Enterprise. By now, there is an incredible collection of Federation and other ships that Paramount keeps at the studio and brings them in as needed to be shot. We'll shoot different elements also depending on what's happening. Many times you're going into a vortex. What's it like going into a vortex? I don't know. This is something where the effects coordinator would get together with myself. It would be referred to as "elements day." That's when you have to be on your toes. This is when you're actually creating elements that could be anything. What's it like to pass near a sun at light speed or going through a dark hole? There are events described in the script which the coordinator has ideas for, and my interpretation of how to evolve into that look. We do a lot of work with liquid nitrogen and dry ice. By either blowing the liquid nitrogen over surfaces or vacuuming it through a hole across a surface, you can create a lot of odd and interesting swirling effects. Dry ice has its own little properties that allow it to be used to create various effects. You might have a crack on the surface of a planet or even in space. Because we use motion control, you can't really capture the look you want with a single pass. The dry ice passing through the crack may look nice, but there has to be more texture to it. You shoot it with dry ice then blow liquid nitrogen across the surface. Since you can repeat the moves exactly, you can add that element and feather it in at the post production stage, and continue to add elements — which gives the effects coordinators opticals to use to create a complete element. You might then get into less antiseptic elements, such as loading handfuls of dirt or rock into a Hoover vacuum cleaner motor and blowing them across a surface using a high-speed camera to try to get some odd dust storm effect. We literally throw handfuls of things called fuller's earth, this fine powdered earth, into a Hoover motor. It looks great at high speed. For those partial seconds of effects, there's this guy covered in fuller's earth and rock, and that would be me. Among the glory of pulling the Enterprise out of its box, there's also the downside of throwing handfuls of dirt into a Hoover to create an effect.

MARK: *Are there several different Enterprises which are shot?*

DENNIS: There is now only one. When the series started, we were using a six-foot Enterprise which was nice but enormous. It was very detailed but incredibly hard to handle. It was heavy. It has to be mounted to our model mover. The camera



each second of the visual effects you see."

unit is on a long track that dollies up and down the track. The camera can go north, south, east, west and zoom. Where the models themselves live is also a whole world of motion control motors. The Enterprise may sit on a head that allows the model to tilt and rotate. A rod or mount will be going through the top or bottom of the ship depending on the shot. To create the illusion that the ship is passing over you, you put the rod through the top of the Enterprise, turn the camera upside-down and the model upside-down, and move over it. When you're done, you have a clean, easy-to-light element of the ship passing over you. We'll often have to flip it several times a day. It can't take a lot of time. The six-foot Enterprise was a monster that way. There were a fistful of cables for all the lighting elements inside that had to be carefully snaked through the ship and pulled out the other side whenever you wanted to change one mount to another. That's what they used for the original year and a half for NEXT GENERATION. They also added a two-foot Enterprise, which we used for distance shots. Obviously, if you have a six-foot model, you would have to get further away — a football field away — to get the effect that was sometimes desired. The two-foot-long one we used when we wanted the ship to appear far away. Anyway, they both lasted a year and a half when it became obvious it took too much time. We ended up with a four-foot Enterprise, which we've used since the first season and a half for all the shots.

MARK: *One of the most talked-about aspects of DEEP SPACE NINE is the wormhole. Do you have any contribution to that?*

DENNIS: It's mostly a computer-generated element. Our contribution was to shoot a lot of smoke effects to enhance and contribute to the creation of the look. What is a wormhole? What does a wormhole look like? We experimented with smoke, dry ice, and backlighting, cutting holes in black seamless paper, creating shafts of light as part of the wormhole. Though the entire element is computer-generated, we tried to create the look. Suffice to say, people would be amazed how many hours, days went into creating a few seconds. Which makes it such an interesting element.

MARK: *How did you become involved in STAR TREK and DEEP SPACE NINE?*

DENNIS: It's a funny thing. With the exception of about everyone I know, with the exception of a handful of camera operators and assistant cameramen who did the right thing and went to film school, they knew what they were going to do. They did their student film projects, they met a few people, they did a few shows — that's one road. That definitely works. What's odd about doing stuff like this is that there're enormously more people who, in their own odd way, stumbled upon it. In my case, I came to Los Angeles in 1983, yet another in the horde of would-be actors. I won't even be humble about this. I was a dinner-theater king in Buffalo, New York. I came to L.A. As all actors, you have to do many things. I was also a carpenter. I was working doing some carpentering work for one of the people I met on a film I worked on a summer before. He was, "Oh, that's interesting. I know a guy who's doing a commercial. He needs a table built for putting miniatures on it." That person was Tom Barron, the creator and owner of Image G Iconographics. From, "You want a table built" turned into "These cars have to move. Now, we have to run the fiber optics through the entire table to create street lights and things." Anyhow, ten years later, I'm still there. It's odd how that works. So, I'm working at Image G and we landed the STAR TREK contract.

"We also shoot effects for other features and commercials."

Dennis: "If God wanted a model, he'd talk to Tony." Here's Mr. Meininger working on the "Runabout Dock" for STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9.

I was there as the resident prop rigger guy and became the man who takes the Enterprise out of its box and the Enterprise wrangler. No film school. No model wrangling school. No dry ice and blowing dirt through Hoovers school. Just stumbled into a door that led in that direction. It's serendipitous.

MARK: *What's next?*

DENNIS: Image G is doing great work. DEEP SPACE NINE looks like it's in for a great, long run. For anyone who might be interested in doing effects is that it's generally interesting work, the people are creative and intuitive, and it's generally a positive experience, but it's an incredibly time-consuming process. A normal week is 12, 14, 16 hour days, five or six days a week. You can put in your 60, 70, and 80 hour weeks. If you get to see the show itself finally being shown . . . a lot of times, we'll have to watch it at the studio while we're shooting another one because the hours are long. You sort of miss the event you're creating a lot of times.

MARK: *How does it feel knowing that the things you're creating are seen around the world and will stand the test of time because it's STAR TREK?*

DENNIS: It is an odd sort of feeling. It's hard to imagine how long this series will be going on and the numbers of people seeing it. There you are, creating your effect or putting the Enterprise on a stem. I'm aware of it even at the time, even if I don't catch the episode that this particular shot is being done for, I am aware that it doesn't really matter. I know that, somewhere in a rocking chair, I will be able to turn on the television, 20, 30, or more years from now. It has the kind of track record and longevity that makes it not a fantasy at all but a reality. To think of the number of people that see it . . . to know that it's going to have such a long life . . . to know you're taking part in . . .! They will be masterpieces in their own way. If it's based on popularity that the number of people who will view them over the next 50 years, STAR TREK shows have a very long life. I am aware of its history. At the same time, Image G also shoots effects for other features and a lot of commercials. Talk about extreme opposites! You have STAR TREK, without exaggerating, you can imagine an episode you're working on today showing 100 years from now, perhaps in some class, some study, some media class. At the same time, we're working on a commercial which has a shelf life of a number of weeks. So, you're aware of the fact that you're spending all this time working on something that will have a long life, that will be around for awhile.

MARK: *So, you're creating the future.*

DENNIS: Certainly creating the present's impression of the future and our views on what the future will be. How that will be viewed, and that it will be. It may be, they'll go back and go, "Isn't this cute? Look how they thought the future would be. Look at this little transporter thing. Why would we use a transporter when we have a glubitoblab, or whatever?" That it's something that will be referred to, something those odd little people of the late 20th century who were in so much trouble . . . it's no wonder they would look to the future, because their present was so messed up. They created this whole series. I can see that happening, even if people have no respect for this series. Though 100 years from now, I don't anticipate that at all. It will definitely be used as a reference for how the people of our times viewed what the future might be like.

Page 18 pencils, by Gordon Purcell, featuring Montgomery Scott — from STAR TREK #42.

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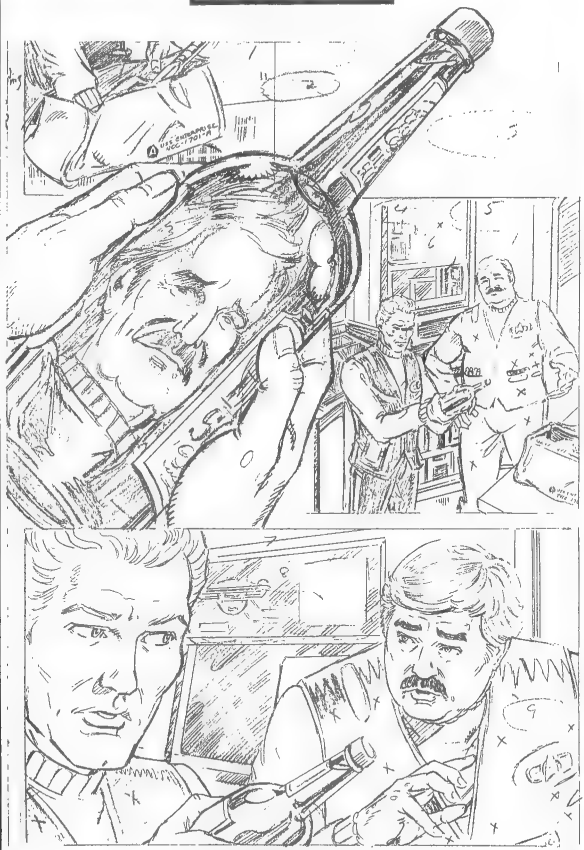
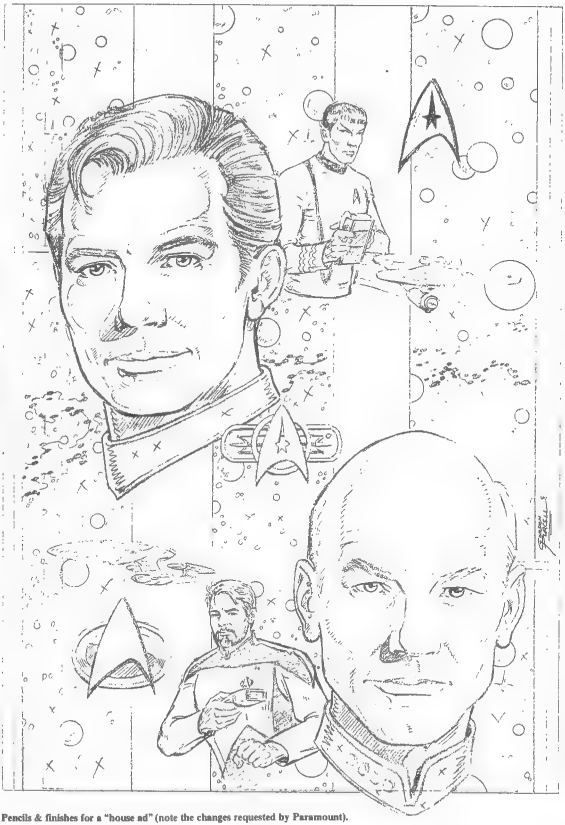
One of two *never before seen* pencil pages from STAR TREK #16 — featuring Bones, Kirk, Scotty and Spock. Story was rejected by Paramount on grounds of being "too humorous," Pencils by Gordon Purcell.

Pencils by Purcell from Uhuru and Sulu's only solo adventure, STAR TREK #30.

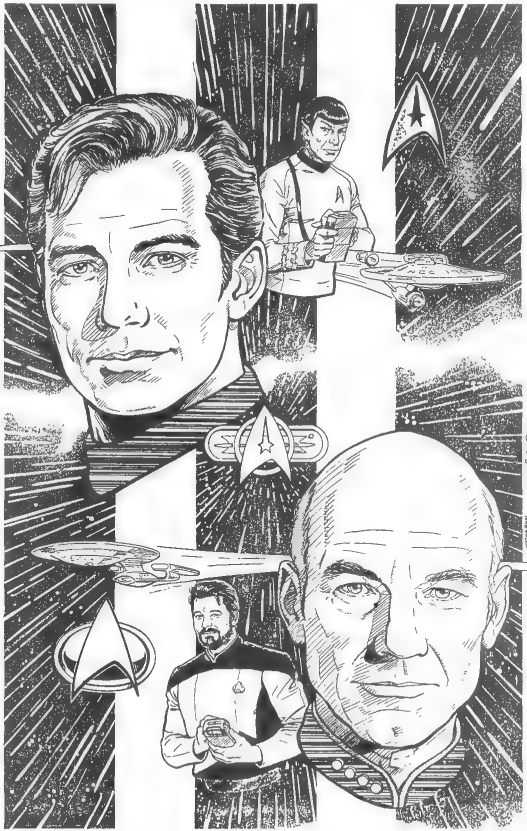


More pencils from STAR TREK #38, showcasing ol' Scotty.

STAR TREK #40 with Sulu, Kirk and McCoy — pencils: Purcell.



Pencils & finishes for a "house ad" (note the changes requested by Paramount).



LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth ... NY 10001

SMALL WORLD

Dear DAK,

I really enjoyed CI #122 with the REN & STIMPY-related interviews. I can't get into much of the suprahero material these days.

I am a big fan of your writing, and was responsible for sending the notations for your excellent *Lunatik* character listed in OVERSTREET under THE DEFENDERS title. Will he ever be heard from again? There are not many unique characters around in today's comics, I hate to say. I do like Tundra/KSP's Madman, though.

I'm a retired professor of art and art history and spend most of my time trying to make contacts with publishers for some of the better talents in the ALPHA OMEGA Christian comics spa.

One added note. I just read the interview with **Marc Swayze**. Talk about a small world! My wife and I lived in Monroe, LA, Marc's hometown, from 1963-67, where I taught art studio and art history courses. We then moved to Bowling Green, KY, where I taught art at Western Kentucky University. I would have given anything to have gotten to know Marc. Like him, I'm also a (former) musician and love Dixieland jazz.

I have no doubt he and I knew many of the same people in the art and music departments at NLU. Oh, well.

Incidentally, for what it's worth. My wife and I are from SW Louisiana, Lake Charles, Cajun country. I got my Masters at LSU.

Harry W. Miller
1106 Jones Ave.
Bowling Green, KY 42104

THE "PEOPLE" VS. JEPH LOEB THE VERDICT: GUILTY!

Dear DAK;

The brief interview with **Jeph Loeb** in CI #123 finally motivated me to raise a topic that has been a source of annoyance for a number of years.

Regarding **Mr. Loeb's** revival of DC's CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN, he states at one point, "the people who read the book loved the book."

Since I consider myself one of the "people," I guess that makes me a minority of one, inasmuch as I read the book and I did *not* like the book. In fact, I disliked it immensely, and so did most of my comics reading acquaintances. However, the reasons I disliked the book had little to do with the quality of **Mr. Loeb's** writing which was several levels above what currently passes (and has for the past few years) as comics scripting. **Mr. Loeb** is a very good writer, and I have no grounds for criticism there.

What I find open for criticism is his basic approach to the material, and it is a criticism that can be applied in equal measure to a number of recent revivals of Silver Age characters. I picked up **Mr. Loeb's** CHALLENGERS series primarily because I (and a lot of other people) still retain a certain fondness for the characters. I looked forward to a fresh take on the concept and somewhat different perspective concerning the Challengers themselves, inasmuch as **Mr. Loeb** was not a member of the commercial comics creator community.

What did I find within the pages of CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN? I found that the Challengers were not the fearless, albeit quirky group of adventurers I had known. Instead they were a bunch of broken-down phonies eking out an existence through licensing their images. I found that their exploits were actually the result of brainstorming sessions in a public relations firm. And I also found that the Challengers themselves were reduced to supporting players in the book that bore their name.

As a Challengers fan, I didn't like it. And I didn't continue buying it. Readers who weren't Challengers fans in the first place probably stopped buying it after the first issue. I doubt **Rob Liefeld's** popularity had more than a marginal influence on the book's poor showing. I think the reason the title's sales were less than acceptable was that it had very little to do with the CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN that readers remembered and, ostensibly, wanted to read about. Challengers fans could have cared less if it lacked a Liefeldesque sensibility (or is that an oxymoron?) Granted, the actual story was not poor — if **Mr. Loeb** had written the same book with his own characters, I would have liked it very much.

Now, before I'm accused of bestowing some sacrosanct status upon comic book characters, let me state that I'm not just talking aesthetics here. I'm talking marketing strategies, or a lack thereof. When the green light was given on the CHALLENGERS project, one would naturally assume that the editor, the writer or somebody had a target audience in mind. Obviously, the primary target audience should be composed of readers like me - fans of the CHALLENGERS with money in their pockets. Was I part of that primary target audience? Apparently not, or I wouldn't be writing this letter.

Let's compare a marketing strategy to a sharp-nosed rocket, aimed and fired at the comics buying public. In the case of the CHALLENGERS revival, the tip of the rocket should have been aimed at "Ground Zero"; i.e., fans/buyers/completists who recall the Challengers with some degree of fondness (age and buying power should also be considerations). The secondary target is composed of new readers, first-issue aficionados and the like. Unfortunately, in a case like this, if the tip of the rocket misses Ground Zero, and hits only the secondary target, then a long-term payoff, either in dollars or new readers, will not materialize. In today's comics marketplace, the "casual"

reader is discounted, since the majority of any publisher's revenue is derived from the direct sales market. In my opinion, **Mr. Loeb's** version of THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN not only missed Ground Zero, but barely made it to the secondary target

Now, this in and of itself did not result in a "bad" product, but it did result in a book that featured characters their fans didn't recognize, the general readership didn't care about, and as Mr. Loeb admitted, no one bought.

One could argue that **Mr. Loeb's** CHALLENGERS was simply an experiment that failed and that a "win some, lose some" attitude should be taken but I can't help but suspect that the decision makers at DC may make the sign of the cross if and when another CHALLENGERS revival is proposed Conceptually, the Challengers (as are most of DC's characters) are still sound, even in these post-YOUNGBLOOD days. Unfortunately, it appears that if one particular execution of a character is not well received, either critically or sales-wise, then another revival of that character is considered to be a bad risk.

Revivals of characters can certainly be done differently than their original incarnations without resorting to outright revision, or as is more common, accentuating the "dark" side of the hero(es). Lest anyone think I'm not qualified to voice such opinions, I'll share a bit of practical experience regarding the revival of a well-known and beloved character.

During my tenure as editor-in-chief and senior writer of Millennium Publications, I was instrumental in the company acquiring the comic-book rights to Doc Savage. From the outset, I knew I was in for an uphill struggle, inasmuch as the recent DC version was still fresh in the minds of retailers and fans. My task was to figure out a way to reintroduce the character to the comics medium in a manner that was different and distinct, not only from the DC version, but the earlier Marvel incarnation. While toying with an approach, I always kept uppermost in my mind that the primary target audience was composed of Doc Savage fans.

So (with the considerable help of Millennium's then-creative director, **Mellissa Martin**, and the art team) we came up with an approach that delighted not only Doc fans but reached new readers as well. The approach was not particularly complex; the background of the Doc Savage universe and characters is rich in unexplored details, and I used these details as a springboard. I did not revise, do a "Dark Doc" or say, "This is the way it *really* happened."

The result? Millennium's first DOC SAVAGE mini-series is generally considered to be the definitive comics version of that character, and it sold exceptionally well for an independent comic during a seasonal glut.

I maintained the integrity of the original source material, knowing that my primary target audience were fans of the *original source material*. I feel that part of the success of BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES is due to the respect (not necessarily reverence) the creators display toward the Batman canon.

In my opinion, this approach should be the norm whenever a character revival is proposed. Put a different spin on it, update the material maybe, but keep that rocket unerringly aimed at Ground Zero.

Mark Ellis
P.O. Box 5268
Sun City, FL 33571

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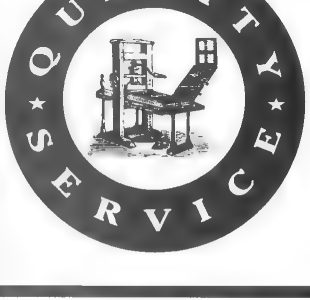

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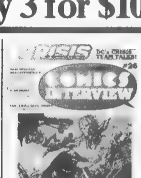

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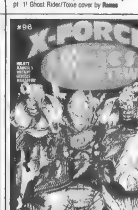

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